

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 TRSE-00 /063 W

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R 022002Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3358

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPAMALTQW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 2595

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH ARCHBISHOP ON HUMAN RIGHTS

1. THE AMBASSADOR HAD A TWO-HOUR FAREWELL MEETING WITH THE ARCHBISHOP OF MANAGUA, MONSIGNOR MIGUEL OVANDO Y BRAVO, ON JUNE 1 AT THE RESIDENCE. HE THANKED THE ARCHBISHOP FOR GRACIOUSLY ATTENDING

A RECENT DESPEDIDA DINNER IN HIS HONOR AT THE SPANISH EMBASSY. THE ARCHBISHOP REPLIED THAT HE CONSIDERED THE AMBASSADOR HIS FRIEND AND A GOOD FRIEND OF THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE. HE ADDED THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS VIEWED WITH SYMPATHY AND AFFECTION BY NICARAGUANS OF ALL SOCIAL STRATA WITH WHOM HE WAS IN CONSTANT TOUCH.

2. QUESTIONED ABOUT THE CURRENT STATUS OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS, THE ARCHBISHOP SAID THAT GOVERNMENT WAS ASTUTE AND WISHED TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION WITH THE CHURCH. FOR THAT REASON THE RECENT EMOTIONAL ATTACKS ON CATHOLIC PRIESTS WHO WERE ALLEGEDLY SUBVERTING THE YOUTH WERE LARGELY DISAVOWED BY THE GOVERNMENT. NOVEDADES'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SUPPOSED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH
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PRODUCED AN OUTBURST OF PUBLIC SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY WITH THE ARCHBISHOP. ACCORDING TO THE ARCHBISHOP, THIS LED TO THE OFFICIAL DECISION TO PULL BACK AND HAVE LIBERAL PARTY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR HIM. THE SOMOZA REGIME IS TRYING TO SHOW THE PUBLIC THAT RELATIONS WITH THE ARCHBISHOP AND CHURCH ARE CORDIAL. HE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAS BEEN INVITED TO ATTEND MANY GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS, AND HIS ATTENDANCE AT THE RECENT WEDDING OF

THE SON OF GENERAL JOSE R. SOMOZA RECEIVED PROMINENT COVERAGE IN NOVEDADES. HE CONCURRED WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S INTERPRETATION THAT THE CRITICISM OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES. HE CONCURRED WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S INTERPRETATION THAT THE CRITICISM OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES WAS INTENDED TO PLACE ALL PRIESTS ON DEFENSIVE AND CONSTITUTED A VEILED WARNING.

3. THE AMBASSADOR OUTLINED THE ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AS CURRENTLY APPLIED IN NICARAGUA. HE ALSO DESCRIBED PERSISTENT AND NUMEROUS EFFORTS MADE BY THE EMBASSY STAFF AND HIMSELF OVER THE PAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS TO PERSUADE GON TO LIFT STATE OF SIEGE AND IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD MADE A DOZEN REPRESENTATIONS TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA ON HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE PERIOD.

4. ARCHBISHOP AGREED THAT LIFTING STATE OF SIEGE WOULD BE IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS RESTORATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTIES AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS. HE ASSERTED THAT IN PAST FEW MONTHS THE NATIONAL GUARD HAD ALLAYED FAMILY FEARS OF PERSONS DETAINED BY ALLOWING RELATIVES TO HAVE ACCESS TO THEM. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD THE ARCHBISHOP THAT THE CHURCH'S VIEW, PARTICULARLY THE AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENTS OF THE BISHOPS, ON HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE OF THE GON WAS IMPORTANT IN SETTING THE LOCAL RIGHTS SITUATION IN PERSPECTIVE. HE SUGGESTED TO THE ARCHBISHOP THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF AN AGREED CHURCH ASSESSMENT, AND ESPECIALLY ANY SIGN OF IMPROVEMENT, OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION COULD BE MADE PERIODICALLY AND THE U.S. EMBASSY KEPT INFORMED. ARCHBISHOP SAID THAT DIRECT CONTACT WITH BISHOPS CONCERNED WAS BEST APPROACH TO ASSESSING CHURCH'S VIEWS. AMBASSADOR TOLD ARCHBISHOP THAT EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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BE IN TOUCH WITH HIM OVER NEXT FEW WEEKS TO DISCUSS THIS AND RELATED MATTERS.

5. THE ARCHBISHOP ENDED CONVERSATION BY THANKING AMBASSADOR FOR HIS EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN NICARAGUA AND FOR THE INTEREST HE HAD SOWN IN HELPING THE POOR. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION AND CONVICTION THAT HIS SUCCESSOR AND THE EMBASSY STAFF WOULD CONTINUE THE WORK THAT HE HAD BEGUN.
THEBERGE

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Message Attributes

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